

IN OUR IMAGE

BY GUSTAVE CARUS

Foreword

THE following lines are intended to express some of the many diverse conceptions of the deity, the cosmos, and humanity which have been held by various people at different times.

The subject is so vast that completeness would be impossible and has not been attempted. It has been the intention to touch chiefly on such points as are of interest today or bear on present-day ideas, although some of the ideas included might seem obsolete or antiquated.

These aphorisms were not conceived as being the thoughts of a single real or imaginary person, but that possibility is not necessarily excluded. Some of the ideas, although absolutely at variance with one another, might well have been held by one individual in different moods and at different periods of his life.

There is no intention to convert the reader to any special belief or doctrine, or to plead, prove, or refute any cause or creed. The intention is merely to give a bare statement, in simplest words of the various ideas under consideration.

I

In his own image man created his God,
And then worshipped Him.

II

In his own image man created his God;
He gave to Him his passions
And saw glory in the passions of his God;
He ascribed to Him his hatred
And then obeyed and hated;
He taught Him his desires
And strove to fulfill them.
He contemplated his God
And worshipped Him.

III

To my God I owe everything,
At His command
I must willingly sacrifice
Even what I treasure most,
Even life.

IV

Mighty and terrible is our God :
He must be appeased
With sacrifice and blood.
If His favor is won
He will give
Rich reward and victory.

V

Let no blood be shed upon this altar,
Let no victim be led to sacrifice,
Let none come in fear and pain ;
But unconstrained and free
Let votaries come,
Singing and dancing,
To offer gifts
Of garlands, fruits, and flowers,
Inspired with joy and love.

VI

Seated on His magnificent throne,
Surrounded by His infinite glory,
Listening to the praises
Sung by His vassal-host,
Reigns the Grand Monarch
Of the realm of Heaven
And of the tributary province,
Earth.

VII

God is asleep;
I am His dream:
He dreams also of lesser gods who speak
In rushing wind, thunder, battles' roar,
And in still small voice.
They demand worship;
But He, asking nothing, sleeps on
And dreams.

VIII

O comely priest,
Preach your doctrine,
Proclaim your faith and god:
Unquestioning I believe;
Your word is my proof and witness;
Any god you teach
I will worship abjectly.

IX

Most awful, unknown,
Mighty and mystic power:
Accept
My reverence,
My gifts,
My worship,
My sacrifice.

X

I have no reverence
For a simple, commonplace thing
That I understand;
But something strange,
Wonderful and marvelous
Which I cannot comprehend:
That I worship.

XI

I forego the gifts of the earth
To seek fulfilment of my longings
Beyond this earthly life.

XII

Alone, in perfection and purity,
Withdrawn from the world and corruption,
I seek salvation.

XIII

The censor of creation sits,
Blue pencil in hand,
Marking out for blame
Such parts of his work
As he made unskilfully.

XIV

I know the way of salvation :
It is the path I follow :
But my own deliverance is not enough :
I can not rest
Until all the world follows my path.

XV

Since belief is virtue
And doubt is sin ;
I will accept
What is declared
Proper for belief :
And that I may avoid
The least doubt,
My thoughts shall avoid
My creed.

XVI

Though I do not comprehend,
Unquestioning I accept
My creed.

XVII

Devoid of reason
Is my creed ;
Were it rational
There were no need of faith.
Because it is absurd
I believe.

XVIII

I seek not paradise,
Nor my salvation,
Nor my righteousness:
I seek God alone.

XIX

God is sought in ancient tradition,
In strange miracles,
In hidden mysteries;
I find God
In my ecstasy.

XX

At the world's demand,
Unwillingly, I deny my belief
And profess what I hold false;
Secretly, hiding my regret,
I cherish my true faith.

XXI

We are few
Amid a hostile multitude;
Yet with care and love
We strive to keep pure
The rite and faith
We hold to be true.

XXII

In my heart is a conviction;
I will hold to it
Even against all the world—
I can do no other.

XXIII

The world is a battle-field,
All time is time of war,
Two great hosts contend;
You, too, must share in the strife:
Choose well your host
And be loyal.

XXIV

When truth is vile
And falsehood fair,
When truth is dark
And falsehood bright,
When the true brings evil
And the false brings good:
To which shall I turn?

XXV

I can not bear to see
This bleak world as it is;
I would fain be deceived,
I must have an illusion.

XXVI

I ponder over fantastic ancient lore:
I would it might be true.

XXVII

Let fact and truth
Be forgotten,
Lest they destroy
Delightful conceits and fancies.

XXVIII

If God is but a dream,
Let me not wake.

XXIX

As I would it were,
I let it seem,
And thus believe.

XXX

Let me doubt
My firmest conviction
And dearest belief,
That I may know the truth
With greater certainty.

XXXI

Let him who must, have faith ;
And let him doubt who dares.

XXXII

God is but a feverish dream
From which I woke.

XXXIII

I disbelieve ;
Blind faith in the preposterous
Is not for me ;
Even though
A vindictive god's hangman
Do his worst.

XXXIV

There is no God.
To my last drop of blood
I will strive to destroy
All belief in God.

XXXV

Believe as you will,
In rite or book,
In gods, in one, or none ;
If God is great
Will he take offence ?
If God is not,
What matters ?

XXXVI

If there be no God,
In what can I believe ?
Whom worship ?
Where find refuge ?
Whom fear ?
How can I have faith ?—
I must invent God.

XXXVII

I would worship :
I seek a God,
Who, in a beautiful temple,
Asks beautiful words
Said in prayers
And sung in hymns
To beautiful music.

XXXVIII

I set myself the task
To create my God ;
A God I will revere above all,
Whom I will love more than all else,
My Masterpiece,
My highest Ideal.

XXXIX

Let the greatest sculptor make a mould,
Let the most skilful founder
Cast in finest bronze
In human form,
A masterpiece :
Worthy to be called
An image of God.

XL

This body my creator placed under my care :
With skill and strength,
With sport and play,
With chaste restraint,
I would keep my trust.

XLI

Though faith and God be false,
Still I follow and love
The ancient book, tradition, rite.

XLII

Without conviction,
Knowing no belief,
I, a loyal and loving son,
Piously hold
To the religion of my fathers.

XLIII

The ancient rites and words
Revered by my fathers,
Sacred though meaningless,
I interpret as symbols
Of my own belief.

XLIV

When prayer is said, I pray ;
When hymns are sung, I sing ;
I join in fast and penance ;
With my fellows I am one.

XLV

Though there be no god,
What is so sacred
As our fellowship
When we gather
To worship?

XLVI

Though God be not,
What is so beautiful
As the humility and reverence
Of prayer?

XLVII

In life we are fearless,
Even of extinction ;
In death we pretend
To ancient illusions.

XLVIII

Atonement and god matter not:
For my sacrifice' own sake
I cast myself into the flames
Upon the altar,
A willing holocaust.

XLIX

Though God is denied,
Are not the deepest thoughts
Found in His book?
Are not the sweetest songs
Sung in His praise?
Are not the richest words
Said in His prayers?
Is not the highest joy
His love?

L

Proclaimed by no prophet
Taught by no gospel,
Served by no priest:
To him who seeks,
God is revealed
In natural wonders.

LI

When free from feverish passion,
When untempted by desire,
When unawed by fear,
I would seek God
In calm speculation.

LII

My thoughts shall lead me on,
Let them lead me where they will:
To a land of the blest
Or to a place accurst.

LIII

Only that power
Which is so great
That it does not command,
Will I obey.

LIV

Though many have denied,
Always some have believed
What I seem to know:
That after this death
I still shall be.

LV

The good should be true
And the true be good;
Seek then the good
And call it true.

LVI

The truth serves well;
What serves me well
I call the truth.

LVII

Though I speak false,
Yet can I persuade
And bring sufficient proof.

LVIII

I know not,
I guess,
I conjecture,
I believe;
But neither I,
Nor you, nor anyone,
Can know.

LIX

What you think is truth,
For you alone is true ;
What I think is truth,
For me alone is true :
There is no truth for all.

LX

What can be seen
And felt
And weighed
Is real ;
All else is merely
A word.

LXI

Many things
I seem to see, to hear, to feel ;
Are they real things,
Or my dreams ?

LXII

Things, real and material,
Are but delusions of the senses :
My thoughts alone are true.

LXIII

The world is but deluded senses,
My mind, but a dream :
Naught is.

LXIV

Whether aught is,
How can I tell ?
As for me,
I know,
Therefore I am.

LXV

About me is the world ;
Within me is my world.

LXVI

Bright and glorious shines the sun,
But useless its radiance
Were I not here to see ;
Majestic and mighty the mountain,
But wherefore its grandeur
Were I not here to be awed ;
Lovely the eyes of woman,
But futile their beauty
Were I not here to be charmed.

LXVII

It was not light before it struck my eye,
There was no beauty before I thrilled,
It was not sound until I heard,
How can aught be unless I am?

LXVIII

I am,
There is naught else.
The world is merely what I see,
It is as I see it:
Thus let it be.

LXIX

I am
My master,
My lord,
My king,
My emperor,
My pope,
My god.

LXX

The eye sees,
The ear hears,
The hand feels,
There is thought ;
I am not.

LXXI

Events stamp their mark
On passive plastic wax:
That am I.

LXXII

I do not understand the world,
It rests heavy on me;
But in a day of toil
I forget its weight.

LXXIII

What appears as evil
Is hidden good;
This world,
Though it seems filled with wrong,
Is the best that can be.

LXXIV

In this,
The worst of all possible worlds,
Where it were best for man
Never to be born,
Or soon to die,
I still live on.

LXXV

Where there is joy
There too is pain;
Where there is love
There too is hate;
Where is no evil
There is no good.

LXXVI

Though I find only pain,
Among toils and evils,
And a futile end:
Yet I will live.

LXXVII

Through disappointment and disillusion
I still hope that the world may become
As I would it should be.

LXXVIII

At my own command
I must obey
An unproclaimed law
Which I hold
All the world might heed.

LXXIX

In this brief span
I would calmly bear the grief
And fully know the joy.

LXXX

Though I may find
The highest hope
Or deepest despair,
I must seek to know
And understand.

LXXXI

What was
Became what is,
And will become what shall be ;
It must be as it is
And cannot be otherwise.

LXXXII

Always there was a thought,
I found it and made it mine,
Others may come upon it,
It may be lost,
It may not be found,
But it shall endure.

LXXXIII

Before I hear or see or feel
What is,
I know what must be.

LXXXIV

Let wealth and riches,
Let glory and honor
Pass me by:
I would but know and understand
The world and myself.

LXXXV

I am of the Earth,
To the Earth I am true;
I will have no
Unearthly things or promises;
Let me with the Earth keep faith
And to Earth be resolved again.

LXXXVI

Though gods and temples crumble
And the world fall in ruins,
I have yet myself,
Myself I may keep whole.

LXXXVII

For praise and blame
Of what I am,
Of what I do,
I appeal to my highest judge:
Myself.